

Memories, songs of beach music continue

Bands well-known in Kershaw County are mentioned in new book



C-I photo by LaDonna Beeker

Dan Stevenson (first row, left) and Fred Oxley, former band members of the Dynamic Chantelles, Jerry Sheheen of the Reflections, Tommie "TJ" James of Second Nature, Earl Rush (second row, left), Sandy Sanders, and Johnny Roland, all of the

Reflections, reminisce of their past band days while looking through "The Heeey Baby Days of Beach Music," a new book written by Greg Haynes. Each musician was mentioned in the book, along with several other band members.

By LADONNA BEEKER
C-I (Camden, S.C.) Localife editor

Beach music never left the hearts of many, and to others, it's a new addition to their music library.

Greg Haynes began working on "The Heeey Baby Days of Beach Music" -- a 12-pound, coffee table book named after the famous beach music song by the late Bruce Channel -- about a decade ago, which included catching up with one of Camden's own beach music celebrities, Tommie "TJ" James.

James, now a keyboard player and manager of the band, Second Nature, said Haynes contacted him about eight years ago after getting his name from other beach music performers in the South. James said he opened a trunk full of memorabilia that he had in his home from the days of beach music -- about 40 years ago.

"I never thought anyone would want to see these things," James said. "It was just awesome, and he said this was exactly what he was looking for. I'm glad that someone will now see it."

James began his career in beach music with bands in high school -- Marquis & Nomads, later the Duprees. He explained that during his early days, the "kids" would all get together and play for fun -- not for money. Once he began attending Clemson College in the fall of 1962, James along with five musicians developed the Footnotes. The Footnotes did mostly weekend gigs, which helped James save more money

to stay at Clemson. After receiving his second partial scholarship at Clemson, he was invited to join The Caravelles in 1964. This band had several bookings that kept the money flow pretty consistent for James. He was able to pay the rest of his college education.

The Caravelles had a 1948 Trailways tour bus that they used to go to gigs at venues that included American Legion Huts, Pawleys Pavilion in Pawleys Island, fraternity and sorority houses, clubs, and hotel and country club ballrooms. They remodeled the bus to add bunks in the rear and seating for 14 people in the front.

One of James' duties while playing the keyboard and being a part of the vocals for The Caravelles was managing the band. Among the memorabilia that James let Haynes use for his book was a notebook full of locations where the band played, as well as the total cost to perform and travel and payment to each band member.

For example, on Sept. 17, 1966, each band member received \$30 for a gig at the Phi Delta Theta Fraternity with Emory University and then Oct. 1, 1966, each member earned \$20 for a performance at N.C. State University with their Sigma Nu Fraternity.

As they traveled to various venues, they would open for some tops names which included: The Clovers, Drifters, Coasters, Impressions, Shir-elles, Crystals, Zodiacs and Tams. James got to meet several other celebrities, such as Smokey Robinson and The Miracles, Major Lance, The

Platters, Jerry Butler and James Brown.

"I was always in awe of their talent and presentation skills," James said.

After graduating from college, he joined the Persians in 1967 and stayed with them until 1970, which was the end of the "Heeey Baby Days."

"So, those Heeey Baby Days of Beach Music were good to 'ole TJ," James wrote in an excerpt included in Haynes' book. "I got married in 1967, started a family, and began a series of 'day jobs,' but never lost my passion for playing music in a band."

While continuing to play with the Persians, James moved to Camden in 1968, and later reunited with the Marquis/Duprees, which in turn became known as Second Nature in January 1971.

The days of beach music weren't only about the songs, but also about the bands' outfits. During this time period, suits or tuxedos were often required at gigs and were typically coordinated with each other.

"Many bands adopted the early 'Beatles look' with their British-style clothing, but most of the bands I was in preferred traditional styles that were popular with our college friends at the time," James said.

In addition to James' stories about his experiences during the "Heeey Baby Days" are some additional favorites around Kershaw County: The Reflections which include Johnny Roland, Sandy Sanders, Jerry Sheheen, Earl Rush, Buddy Harre, Danny

Massalon, Steve Lovelace, and Leo Price; and Dan Stevenson and Fred Oxley, both of Camden, and formerly of the Dynamic Chantelles.

Many of these band members also started playing in a band while at high school and through college.

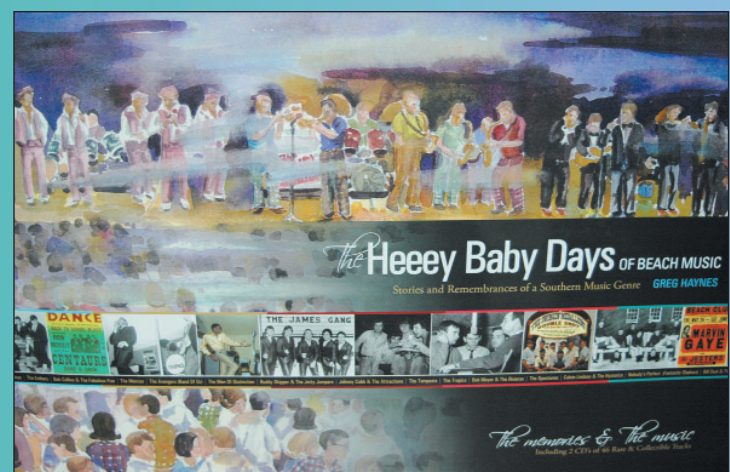
The Reflections began in 1974 with original members of the Trends, which started in 1963. The Trends played for private parties, junior/senior proms and several dances. The band was even hired by Roland's mother, Betty, for a silver dollar to perform at a barn dance after putting saw dust on the concrete floor and selling tickets. They kept the music to mostly instrumental for the first year with two trumpets, two guitars and a drummer. It was later with much more experience that the musicians began adding new style to their music.

"Every time I get my horn out I think of my high school days," said Rush, trumpet player in Reflections. Rush is also taking his beach music memorabilia and designing a "Beach Music" room in his home to keep the feeling alive.

For most band members, it's the long hours of practice for a gig that is all forgotten when they get on the stage and see the crowd having a good time.

Stevenson, former keyboards player with the Dynamic Chantelles, said, "There is no feeling like it. When everything you practiced hits with a crowd and you connect with them, it is all worth it."

But the music wasn't the only thing that put a smile on the faces on the musicians. The



C-I photo by LaDonna Beeker

"The Heeey Baby Days of Beach Music" includes memorabilia from bands throughout the South that played R&B, now referred to as beach music by many.

women in the audience always seemed to glow a little bit more when a man with a smooth voice singing into a microphone approached center stage or when that guitar or trumpet player with have a solo.

"I got nervous when we played for sororities," said Sheheen, trombone player for the Reflections.

Even though there was at least one "ladies' man" in each group that might get left behind after a gig because instead of being on a bus, he was chasing women, the musicians stayed focused on their music and the purpose of the performance.

"One of the things my friends used to say about my playing was, 'I can't believe you get paid to have that much fun,'" said Oxley, former trumpet player for the Dynamic Chantelles. "Yes it was fun, but

they didn't understand all the hours of practice, whether individually or as a band that go into reaching that level of music."

For the bands of the "Heeey Baby Days" of beach music that still exist and even those groups that vanished because of the war or life changes, the memories and the feeling of being on stage still remain.

"I would not trade the camaraderie with the other guys, the music and the joy of watching folks have fun for all of the pretties in Persia," said Roland, trumpet player for the Reflections.

Books may be bought from James (432-5834) for \$59.95 or through Haynes' Web site, www.heeybabydays.com.

(LaDonna is Localife editor of the Chronicle-Independent. Contact her at 432-6157 or e-mail localife@ci-camden.com.)

25in broad100

EVEN



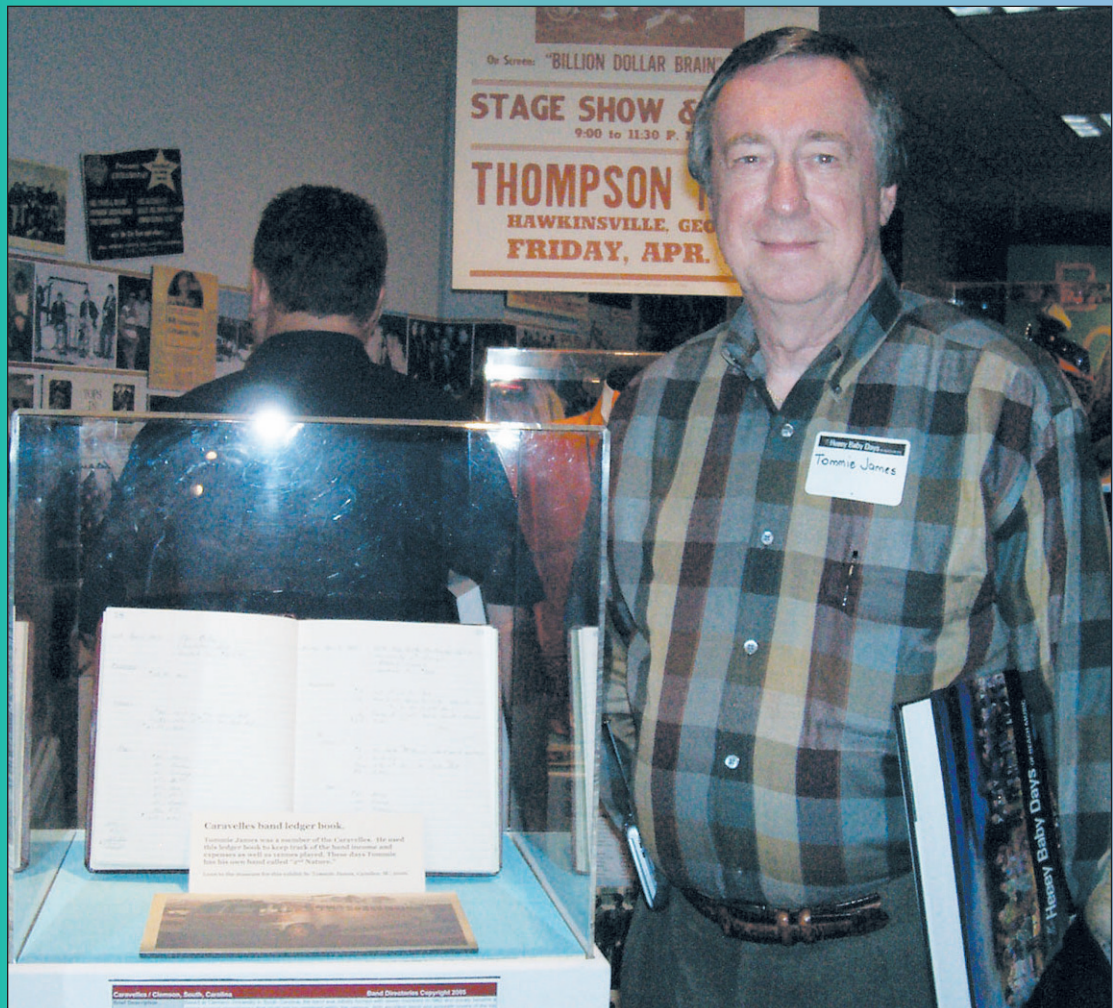
Photo provided by the Fine Arts Center of Kershaw County

The Reflections includes members that were in the Trends, a band from the early 1960s. The band still plays some of the same music from their previous days in Camden.



The Music

Photos provided by Tommie James Buzz Arledge (left), Harry High, Tommie James and Hank Martin with The Duprees perform at the Myrtle Beach Pavilion in 1962. This photo is on display in the Georgia Music Hall of Fame, as well as in "Heeey Baby Days." Haynes was honored at the Hall of Fame in Macon, Ga., Oct. 6, with the release of his new book.



Tommie James stands next to a display at the Georgia Music Hall of Fame that includes a photo of the 1948 Trailways bus that The Caravelles traveled to gigs in, as well as the ledger book that TJ kept while the manager of the group. The ledger book

includes gigs such as the Phi Delta Theta Fraternity at Emory University, where each member earned \$30 and a performance at N.C. State University with their Sigma Nu Fraternity, where \$20 was given to each member.